



Embracing God's People • Equipping Disciples • Accompanying Believers

June 27, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I thought it might be helpful to try to summarize our ongoing efforts here at Lourdes to resume public worship and to more fully engage in the broader sacramental life of the Church. There have been developments in terms of protocols, and there have been some necessary changes to our schedules as a result.

There are four pillars around which we have developed our protocols for reopening for public worship. To facilitate the participation of the maximum number of people physically in church on a Sunday morning requires 20 volunteers for each mass. To them, we all owe a debt of deep gratitude. Without their willingness to serve, make no mistake, we would be unable to resume the opening of our doors for public worship in a COVID-world.

- Contact-tracing - allows us to reach out to those present in church in the event of an outbreak
- Cleaning - disinfecting the church between every mass, limiting contact surfaces, etc., enables multiple services
- Symptoms Checks - checking for fever, cough, shortness of breath, during the past 14 days
- Adherence to (Health) Best Practices - washing hands, face-coverings, social distance, etc., are (necessary) expressions of our care for others during this COVID-time

I want to thank all our parishioners (and visitors) who have been coming to Church for your cooperation in helping us fulfil the protocols for contact-tracing. Our pre-registration process has been working well, supplemented by our use of manual contact-tracing cards. It is also commendable that people are willing to live with the discomfort of face-coverings for the good of others in the community. Our discomfort and the inconveniences with which we deal as a result of social distancing are a relatively small sacrifice for the health and well-being of our fellow worshippers.

### **Public Mass on Sundays**

By way of an update, we continue to have three masses celebrated in public on Sunday morning, and they are scheduled at 7am, 9am and 11am. Both the 9am and 11am are available to our parishioners who cannot yet return to public worship, but who avail of the ZOOM platform to participate from home.

Our Spanish-language mass is celebrated at 1:30, for home participation. The community looks forward to resuming public worship next week, on July 5th.

It is important to remember that Archbishop Gomez has extended the **dispensation from the obligation to attend mass on Sundays** indefinitely to facilitate those of our communities who are not yet able to return to Church in person.

It is also our intention to continue to make our celebrations of the Eucharist available by means of live broadcast to parishioners who are “at risk” or “vulnerable” for as long as it takes.

I’m keeping one ear and one eye turned to receive news of revised guidance that our initial reopening efforts have been broadly successful, and that we might increase the numbers of people who can participate in worship at any one time in our Church. As numbers warrant it, and demand for being present for public worship grows, we will continue to review our mass schedules to accommodate.

### **Public Mass on Weekdays**

We recommenced the public celebration of mass on weekdays last Monday, and our modest congregation has welcomed the opportunity to gather for Eucharist. Again, this is facilitated by the generosity of volunteers who give of their time in service of the community. We will continue to broadcast our daily mass at 8:30am into the future, to accommodate those who find it beneficial. We will also continue our Tuesday Morning “Coffee in the Vestry” and our Thursday morning “Rosary” facilitated over the Zoom platform.

### **Adoration**

We continue to work on preparing to reopen the church for private prayer before the **Blessed Sacrament** during the week. Last week’s request for volunteers to assist in making this possible did not go unanswered, but we continue to look forward to building a team that can make this a possibility for our people once again. If you, or anyone you know, is interested in volunteering to assist in this particular effort, I would ask that you indicate this in an email to [parishcenter@ollnr.org](mailto:parishcenter@ollnr.org). Once again, when we have the volunteers and can train them, we will be able to move forward with this important step also. As I mentioned last week, I imagine keeping the church open on a limited basis, perhaps for a couple of hours immediately following morning mass, at least to start with. Our steps forward in this will be determined by the availability of volunteers.

### **Funerals & Weddings**

Protocols for the resumption of funerals and weddings are moving ahead, but very slowly. I continue to await revised and updated guidance both from LA County and from the Archdiocese. In the interim, we are treading slowly and carefully. We want to avoid any back-ward steps in these early days of resuming our public worship. As time passes, and depending on the movement of COVID-related numbers, I hope for increased numbers to be permitted for the gatherings associated with these very significant life events. I likewise hope for the continued service and generosity of our volunteers to make possible the necessary cleaning and disinfecting that will be part of our future in the near- to intermediate-term.

### **First Communion & Confirmation**

These significant events in the sacramental life of the parish community were deferred for some 90 young people and 65 teens, as well as for adults journeying through the RCIA process. We are in the process of scheduling opportunities for the celebration of these important sacraments in the life of our community, and it is looking like they will be ongoing over a period of weeks. Like all other public gatherings here at Lourdes, these celebrations will be modified with the health and well-being of our community uppermost in our mind.

## Homecoming Volunteers

Speaking of the incredible volunteers we have, once again I renew my invitation to those who may be interested in our efforts to resume public worship to consider volunteering to be part of our **Lourdes Homecoming Volunteers** team. We rely on volunteers for Sunday masses, for mass on weekdays, and into the future, for keeping our church open for adoration, for funerals and for weddings. Please complete the [volunteer registration form](#) on the parish website. We will be happy to provide the necessary training, and work with you to find a way of serving that works with your schedule. A review of the [video](#) on what to expect when coming to mass at Lourdes in these COVID-times will be a helpful orientation to get started.

## The Further Adventures of Mollie Loftus

My sister-in-law shared the photograph to the right with me last Sunday, Father's Day. It's evident from the picture that my brother (Ronan) is settling nicely into the realities of literally having his hands pretty full. Those of you who have "been there" can well appreciate what this means. Mollie's godfather (that would be me), on the other hand, gets to simply take delight in the shifts that the passing of time brings with it. Mollie continues to grow into the awareness of all that is entailed in the role of "big sister". It seems that she has now accepted that Anna will be "staying" with them for the foreseeable future. Sharing mom and dad's attention isn't the challenge we might have expected for Mollie, but there's still time for that struggle to manifest more concretely. For now, not only does she look content to share Dad's care, but from the "independent reports" of my sisters, Mollie is happily adjusting to the new reality. Her greatest excitement this week in relation to her sister was occasioned by little Anna delivering what Mollie considers to be "mustard poop"! For my part, I'm just delighted that the "new reality" isn't all COVID-related. Once again, my young niece reminds me that COVID or not, the world continues to turn on its axis, and there's a life to be leaned-into and fully-lived.



With that said, friends, please enjoy the rest of your weekend. Once again I ask for your continued prayers for the success of all our efforts oriented toward the full resumption of our communal faith life as a people of God. In the words of St. Paul, know that I continue to pray you every grace and blessing:

*I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you, praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. It is right that I should think this way about all of you, because I hold you in my heart, you who are all partners with me in grace... For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus." (Phil 1:3-8)*

*Fr. David*